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An Essay
on
Dysmenorrhœa. (handed)
By

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Virginia

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Dynamites

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Dysmenorrhœa

It is the office of the uterus to elaborate and discharge at regular periods a peculiar fluid. When this discharge is partial, and attended with much pain and difficulty, it is termed Dysmenorrhœa.

Notwithstanding the importance of this disease with regard to the healthy economy of the female, medical writers have paid but little attention to it. Dr. Denman was the first that noticed it particularly; and to him, we are indebted for its history and true character. Dr. Fothergill has spoken of it vaguely, and Cullen has merely given it a place in his first lines. Dr. Denman was the first who considered an organized substance as constituting a part of this disease; though he has offered no expla-

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ration of the formation of that substance. In
any case of habitual painful menstruation, he
thinks this membrane is expelled.

Of late, two interesting papers on this subject
have been written by Dr^r Chapman and Deas.
Their opinions, always entitled to respect, are
calculated to remove much of the obscurity with
which it has hitherto been surrounded.
They adopt the theory of secretion, which has generally
been ascribed to the celebrated Hunter; and be-
lieve the membrane decidua exists in almost every
case of abstracted and long continued Amenor-
rhoea. Dr D. has gone into a very ingenious de-
tail of the fabrication of the membrane; he
supposes the process of secretion is merely to
dissolve the blood of the power of coagulating;
from the fact, that coagulation does take
place when there is uterine derangement,
and that in health it is never the case.

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He therefore makes coagulation a test of the unhealthy action of the Uterus. When the functions of this viscus then are performed imperfectly, the Lymph does not undergo a modification, but is thrown into the cavity of the Uterus, preserving the power of separation and of coagulation. As the fluid is poured gradually into the Uterus, it has time to separate into its coagulent parts. The red globules from their greater weight and density, will leave the uncoagulated lymph, and fall to the bottom of the Uterus and sooner or later be discharged; while the Lymph spreading itself over the internal surface of the Uterus, soon assumes the appearance of membrane, as is usual with it when in contact with living parts.

This membrane will be, to all intents and purposes, an extraneous substance to the Uterus; and will sooner or later urge it to contraction.

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to throw it off; which contractions will be painful like those of labor: hence the pain in this kind of menstruation.

Whether this view is correct, is a matter of speculation. But, that the vesicles of the uterus, which pour out the catamenia are the instruments by which the decidua is formed, there is no doubt. And it is equally true, that while they are engaged either in the formation or support of this new production, menstruation ceases.

Causes.

The remote causes of this disease, it would be difficult to assign. The most common, are cold applied during the evacuation of the menses; taking cold after abortion; and sometimes it has followed the consummation of marriage. This latter cause is difficult of explanation.

Symptoms.

This disease usually attacks those who are pre-

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deposited or obvious to it, and commences with a slight
menstruous discharge, which in a short time suddenly
ceases, and the woman instantly experiences violent pain; described by her as forcing down and
uttering at longer or shorter intervals, till a
membranous substance or small coagula are dis-
charged; sometimes small and at other times large
and resembling the cavity of the uterus in shape.
After this substance is expelled, the woman enjoys
ease, until there be a fresh production to stimu-
late another effort in the uterus for its evulsion.
Several days are sometimes spent before these op-
erations cease and at other times only a few hours are
required. The degree of pain is not in propor-
tion to the quantity of membranes; as sometimes
a small portion is discharged after a great
deal of suffering, and a large portion may be thrown
off without producing as much uneasiness. Besides the
uterine pains, there is generally a distressing re-

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ing in the back and hips, which almost invariably announces the approach of the period. In some instances this continues for several days. The sufferings at the menstrual period are sometimes so severe, that they resemble in intensity the pains of labor or abortion.

There appear to be two distinct states of this affection - one where the mammae sympathize with the uterus and become tumid and oftentimes extremely painful; the other where no such affection is induced. In the management of these two conditions, the one accompanied with pain is thought least difficult.

Treatment.

Assuming it as a principle, that menstruation is a secretory process, and that this disease depends upon a perversion of the healthy action of the uterus, our remedies must be first directed to the relief of pain, and secondly, to restore

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catthy actions the first of these indications is met
with alum and aloes in the form of decocts powder;
or aloes and alum, the warm bath; someti-
times to the ague of the uterus; and if the har-
tents sufferings are very intense, 100 drops of lau-
danum may be injected into the rectum. When
there is inflammatory diarrhoea, venereation is a
most critical and should never be omitted. Of his
alum and camphor Dr. Chakman speaks with
much confidence; which is the result of his own
practice. Administered in the proportion of two
grains of the first article, to ten of the latter
has seldom failed in his hands. Dr. Bawer recommends
the following formula.

Op. Gum Camphor 3j

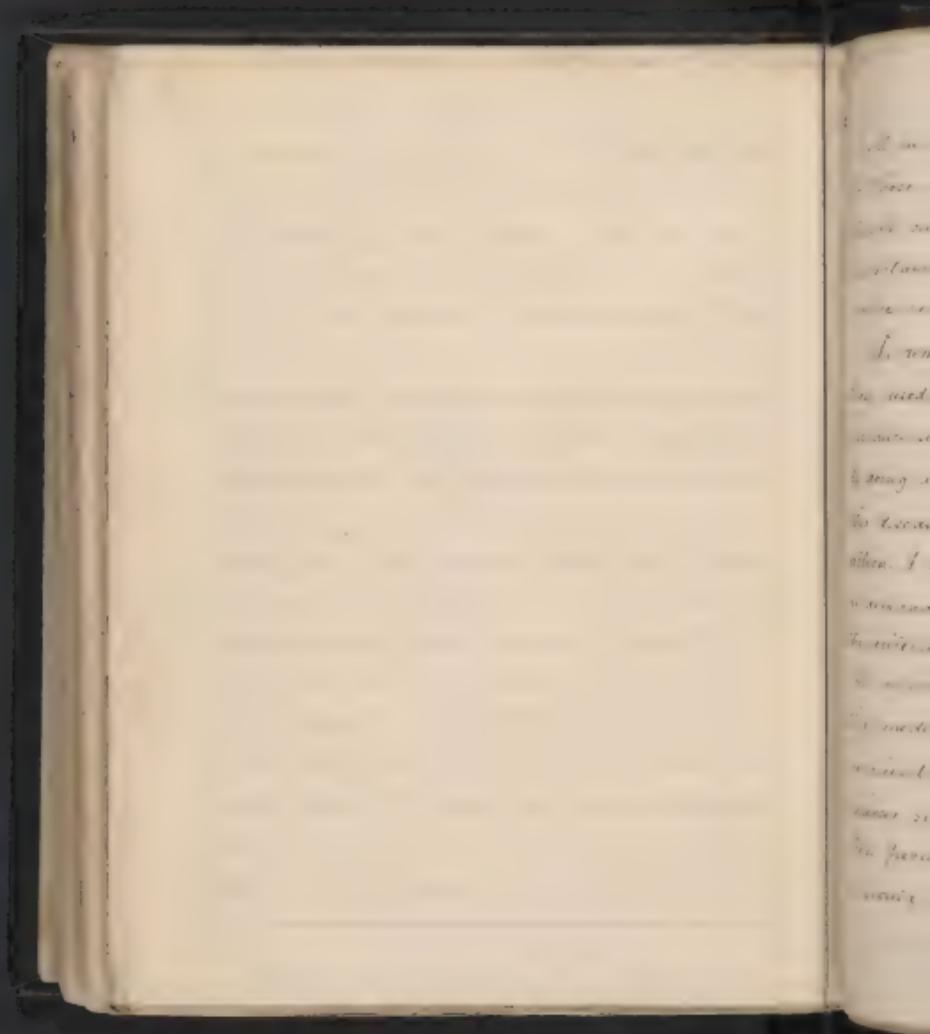
Sp. Vin. Rect. q.s. f. subalbato

Sac. Alla q.s. & minij

et aqua iunx. tinct. 3j. min.

As soon as pain is experienced, one half of

This draught is to be given; and if not relieved in an hour or two, the residue should be exhibited. In all cases, this quantity is not sufficient to subdue pain, and the mixture should be repeated; or the same quantity of Camphor may be finely powdered and given in ten grain doses every hour until relief is procured. Should the Stomach be so disengaged as to bear nothing upon it, and this sometimes is the case, thirty or forty grains of camphor, ought to be rubbed down with a few drops of the spirits of wine to a very fine powder, $\frac{3}{4}$ of Laudanum, and $\frac{3}{4}$ of thin starch or flaxseed tea, and used as an injection. If this be too suddenly discharged, it may be repeated. The Ergot from its affinity to the uterus, would seem to afford us here an invaluable remedy, for besides the specific effects exerted by it on that organ, its action is almost instantaneous but still our applications are not met



by it in this disease. Its efficacy is only confined to those cases where the decidua exists, and though cures have been effected with it, most respectable Authorities think its claims to our notice very slender.

The remedies next presenting themselves are those used during the intervals of the attacks, to produce such a change, as will prevent a return, by doing away that state of the uterus on which this disease depends, and establishing a new action. I will first mention the Polygala Senega as demanding our attention, in those cases, where the interruption depends on a membrane. All who are familiar with the effects of this medicine upon the system, must have perceived how actively it promotes the various secretory discharges. It would seem then peculiarly adapted to dysmenorrhœa, as it would appear obvious, that both a forcible

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nd specific impression should be made on
the uterus, to excite it to a secretory effort.
To Dr. Wats-horne is due the credit of introducing
the practice. The Dr. Chapman immediate-
ly gave it a fair and extensive trial, and from
his success, is warranted in recommending it as one
of the most active Emmenagogues. It may be
administered either in powder or decoction,
but the latter mode is preferred. Of the
decoction, about four ounces should be given
during the day, or more or less according to
the circumstances of the case. At the
time however when the menstrual effort
is expected to be made, and till the dis-
charge is induced, the dose should be in-
creased as far as the stomach will bear.
Sometimes as much as two ounces every hour
may be taken. Should the medicine create
nausea, combine with it orange peel, cinnamon and

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In the time between the menstrual periods, the medicine should be laid aside for a week or two, as without these intermissions, if it does not lose its power, it becomes nauseous and disgusting to the patient. While under such a course, the system should always be attended to, equally obviating excessive excitement or debility by the use of appropriate remedies.

In the exhibition of remedies to prevent a recurrence of pain, the Volatile Liniment of Guaiacum is recommended with a confidence that could hardly be derived from success, by Dr. Dewar. Whilst on the other hand, Dr. James, whose extensive practice affords him many opportunities of witnessing its effects, has seen no advantage from its use. The mode of using it is, a teaspoonful every morning, noon, and evening, in a wine glass full of sweetened milk, or when not forbidden by some peculiarity or circumstance, as

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much white wine, as sherry, Sauterne or Madeira. The dose must be gradually increased in those cases where a perseverance beyond four or five weeks becomes necessary. It is necessary sometimes to continue the use of it several months. If this medicine should distract the bowels too much, a few drops of Laudanum must be added to each dose; but if on the contrary they should not be sufficiently opened, the addition of a little resin of Galap or powdered Rhubarb will be an improvement.

Dr. B's formula. Rx Resin Guaiacum 3ij
Carb. Soda vsl 4d. 3j

Sal. Pimenta — 3j

Alcohol dilute 6ij

Digest for a few days, and add the following
dust of Sal. Ammoniac pro. recta in the
proportion of a drachm or two to every four ounces.

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of tincture; or a larger or smaller quantity
according to circumstances. Greater advantage
is to be expected, when the first menstrua-
l period after commencing the use of it
is more than usually severe. This there-
fore may be considered a favorable sign.

The Extract of cicta, the Tincture of Can-
terbury, and the Madder root, have all
been used successfully in this disease.

The Black Hellebore was long since introduced
as an emmenagogue by Mendez, and was com-
mended by him in the strongest terms. Its
use was suspended by the opinion of Cullen,
who pronounced it to be a full and uncer-
tain remedy; but is again resorted, and is thought
to have many just pretensions to the reputation
formerly professed. In painful menstruation,
attended with Torpor and constipation of the
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advantage when all others have failed; I will
mention Mercury. It is a fact well known,
that no medicine in the Materia Medica
has such a specific effect on the secretaries;
and whenever these organs become deranged,
to that medicine we look for correction;
therefore in the most obstinate cases of this
disease, a moderate salivation kept up for
several weeks, will often produce the happiest
effects. A case came under my observation, of
a young lady aged 16 who had her menses sudden-
ly checked by alarm during the discharge. At
each successive period for several months, the flow
was small, and accompanied with much suffering;
she then became subject to the most violent
paroxysms of hysteria. After trying a variety of

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medics without success, her Physician determined to resort to mercury; as soon as syphilism was excited, there was evident change in her mind and feelings, and since that time, the uterus has performed its functions with perfect regularity, and the lady is entirely restored to health. It was impossible to ascertain whether any membrane was exfoliated, as the clitoris could not be examined, and the accounts of the attendants unsatisfactory.

Why should not the Nitro Muriatic Acid be an efficient remedy in this disease? As a promoter of secretions it is thought by many to be only inferior to mercury, and is used as only as an auxiliary to that metal in several diseases, but is also frequently substituted for it. Dr Scott who first used the acid, applied it very extensively to practice; he says "It appears in a peculiar manner to affect the glands and alter their secretions."

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From the analogy then between this and many of the other medicines used in Dysmenorrhœa, it is fair to infer its utility. Used internally or as a bath, the same effects are produced.

In this disease attention should always be paid to the bowels, using laxatives if they are constipated. In an external application blisters applied to the back and thighs will be found highly adomatous, by inviting a determination to the skin and vessels.

The married and single woman are alike liable to this disease, and whilst it continues they are anxious and unhappy; and what renders these cases still more interesting is the influence exerted on the generative power. Until this wrong action is changed, the woman will rarely become a mother.

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